

# Editorial Responsibility

Hobby writers in general—and, it seems, numismatic writers particularly—wield a power of inestimable potential. Considering only North America for the present, we have a hobby/industry of some 5-10 million persons at many levels of involvement. Yet, from that base of self-described coin collectors has sprung a core of numismatic writers who number no more than 500 with any legitimate claim to such a title.

Thus it is seen that the influence of this disproportionately small group is enormous—and so is the responsibility to insure against abuses of the trust inherently thrust upon the numismatic editors and writers.

Presented here are some random thoughts touching upon a number of, but by no means all, areas in which the writer's responsibility to the numismatist comes into play.

Perhaps the most basic and important responsibility of the numismatic writer is to strive for total factual accuracy.

Although it may raise a few eyebrows and objections, contemplate this truism of the numismatic writing game: It is the responsibility of the writer *not* the editor, to maintain factual accuracy.

Too often numismatic authors assume that they can neglect basic research areas in the belief that the editor will catch and correct any mistakes or misstatements. They forget that the editor may be even less well-versed in the topic at hand than is the writer.

While it is true that many of the editors of commercial and organizational numismatic periodicals and the major coin book publishers are old pros with many years of hobby experience; such is not always the case. And even the editor with half a century of numismatic background cannot be expected to be an expert on the myriad diverse areas of collectibility.

The editor of your local coin club monthly newsletter may have collected and/or dealt professionally in U.S. coins for decades but if he receives a member's article for publication that deals with foreign paper money, he cannot be expected to correct mis-

typed Pick numbers or mistaken type note identifications.

In short, if you are not sure enough of your facts, you need to spend more time on research before you try to present your material to the audience.

This also extends to the area of deliberate attempts to mislead the reader, with the motive usually being a lust for quick money or recognition. Nearly every coin editor is familiar with such attempts at petty larceny. A typical case goes like this: the editor receives a freelance submission (or a phone call) dealing with a "rare new discovery" of, for example, a major mint error such as an overdate cent. All too frequently, the story is run without verification and another counterfeiter has had his handiwork legitimized by the numismatic press.

Or perhaps: the editor of the state coin club journal is contacted by a local collector (or dealer) from whom he receives a story concerning the discovery of "the only known" specimen of a heretofore unreported obsolete bank note from what is now a ghost town. In the story there may be a mention that the note will be put up for sale at a later date, the intent being, naturally, to solicit inquiries from eager buyers—not in itself a particularly unethical move, con-

sidering the news value of the find. what is not included in the story, though, is the fact that the lucky finder has turned up not one note, but a small hoard and is concealing the true availability of the notes until the big money has been made on the "unique" specimen.

In such cases, it is the responsibility of the editor to check the facts to the best of his ability. While in the latter case he can be excused for not knowing that the perpetrator was withholding vital information, he cannot be

excused if he should fail to vilify the chiseler publicly should the true facts later emerge.

But rather than buck passing, editor and contributors should work together to present accurate material to their audience.

Another point on which the theme of responsibility can be brought to bear goes beyond the question of an article's accuracy to the article itself. The principal question here is: "Where will this piece best serve the hobby?"

To be sure, for the professional numismatic writer, the consideration of getting paid for one's work has a right to important consideration, but he can help himself in that respect by taking a little time to think through the angle of reader service. After all, the commercial editors will have that uppermost in mind when considering submissions so the writer could well save himself some rejections by first considering the audience which would be most receptive to his work.

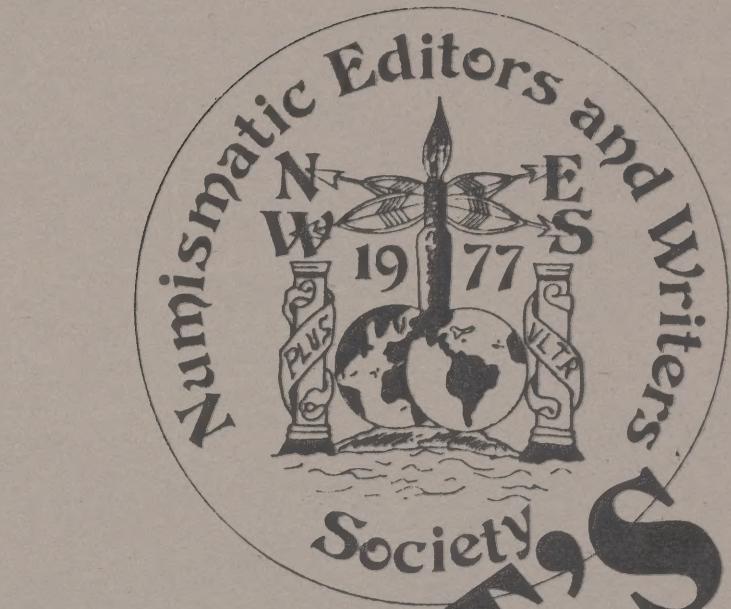
Think through the fact that each of paying numismatic periodicals is serving a difference audience and try to key in on that readership. While on the surface it may appear that *Numismatic News* and *Coin World* or *Coin, Coinage* and *Coin Illustrated* are all aimed at the same readers, a bit of logical thought would tell you that such could not be the case if all were to survive economically. Each of these publications has identified a particular audience made up of one or more segments of the numismatic community and is gearing its content toward those collectors.

It is often easier to determine the prime readership of the organizational publications which usually have something of a captive audience in that their publications are directed to the sponsoring organization's membership.

Putting all considerations of money and ego stroking aside, does not the writer better serve the hobby by offering his work on Michigan transportation tokens to the editor of that state's numismatic journal or to the Token and Medal Society Journal than to the editor of *World Coin News*?

Here again responsibility is the watchword.

The membership of the Numismatic Editors and Writers Society is invited to make response to this, or any other editorial matter appearing in the NEWSletter. Members are also urged to submit article of interest to NEWS members for publication.



WHAT'S  
WRITTEN  
WITH US?

## OBJECTIVES

The objective of the *Numismatic Editors and Writers Society* is the encouragement of competent and responsible editors and writers to perpetuate the science of numismatics and to provide a reservoir of numismatic knowledge for the educational benefit of the hobby.

## MEMBERSHIP

Membership to the *Numismatic Editors and Writers Society* is open to any person meeting the requirements specified in Article 3 of the organization's By-Laws.

Applicants must be, at the time of application submittal, either: (1) a current editor of a numismatic publication of an organizational or commercial nature; and/or (2) a numismatic author published at least twice annually in any media.

Membership is divided into two categories: *Regular* for those 18 years of age and older; *Junior* for those under 18 years of age.

## Membership Dues

Annual dues for the *Numismatic Editors and Writers Society* are \$5 for regular members and \$3 for junior members.

In addition, all dues must be paid in advance and be accompanied by the required annual article of a minimum length of 400-words.

## Articles

Each applicant to the *Numismatic Editors and Writers Society* is required to submit at least one article of general or specialized interest within the numismatic subject of not less than 400-words. Articles must be submitted with application for membership or with renewal of dues for each year.

All articles become the property of the *Numismatic Editors and Writers Society* and will be used and disposed of at the discretion of the editorial committee.

All numismatic oriented publications are invited to utilize titles from the *Numismatic Editors and Writers Society* pool. Payment for commercial publications has been set at two-cents (\$.02) per word; for non-commercial use of the articles by non-profit or hobby-oriented clubs and groups, the cost has been set at one-half-cent (\$.005) per word. Checks should be made payable to NEWS.

Upon publication of the article or articles, the author shall be bylined with the letters NEWS placed after his name.

## Application for Membership

Applications for membership into the *Numismatic Editors and Writers Society* are available from the NEWS Secretarial Committee Chairman. A form is available on this brochure. General address for the organization is: *Numismatic Editors and Writers Society*, P.O. Box 113, Iola, Wis. 54945.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City and State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Titles published and where:

If an editor, name of publication, firm or organization:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this application, an article of at least 400-words and \$5 dues to: *Numismatic Editors and Writers Society*, P.O. Box 113, Iola, Wis. 54945.